

IRON

Why do we need it?



Iron is a part of the blood and helps to deliver oxygen throughout the body. Iron is involved in the production of energy from the metabolism of food. Iron helps to make the neurotransmitters used in the brain. Iron also plays a role in the immune system.

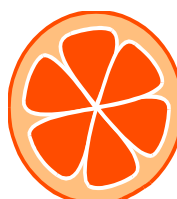
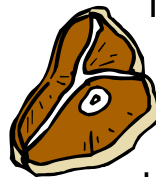
So, if we don't have enough iron, anemia would develop and we would feel fatigued and listless. Our work capacity and exercise tolerance would go down. The tongue and lips can become sore and swollen.



Gastrointestinal disturbances like inflammation, gas, belching, and constipation or diarrhea can occur.

Changes in appetite are not uncommon. Many people develop cold intolerance and decreased resistance to infection. Irritability and short attention span are also common symptoms.

Some conditions require more iron. These would include frequent blood donation, GI bleeding, ulcerative colitis/ Crohn's disease, bypass surgery, chronic malabsorption/diarrhea, and even vegetarianism.



How much do we need and where can we get it?

Most people need 10-15 mg/day, and it can be found in the foods we eat. Good sources of iron come from protein foods like liver, beef, lamb, oysters, sardines, and clams. Iron from meat sources is called heme iron. Other sources, called nonheme iron, come from plants. These would include enriched or whole grains and cereals, dried fruits, beans, nuts and seeds, molasses, potatoes

(with the skin on), and dark green leafy vegetables, like spinach. Nonheme iron is best absorbed if taken with foods high in vitamins such as orange juice, kiwi, strawberries, or bell peppers.